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ART NEEDLEWORK

ALTAR-FRONTS AND TAPESTRIES.



EVERY reader of THE ART AMATEUR probably is aware that the richly decorated altar-cloths once common in European churches were costly and sumptuous to an almost incredible degree. An immense amount of time and labor was bestowed upon them, and pearls and precious stones were often added to the gold and silken embroidery. Among Pope Paschal's gifts to different churches was a ninth-century altar-cloth of Tyrian purple, having in the middle a picture of golden emblems with the faces of several martyrs surrounding the Saviour. The cross was in gold, encircled by a border of beautifully-worked olive leaves. The altar-fronts illustrated on page 80 are also fine specimens of ecclesiastical embroidery. The upper one is of crimson velvet, heavily decorated with gold; it is Genoese work of the fifteenth century, and was formerly in the Fortuny collection, from which it passed to the recently-sold collection of San Donato. The other is of red brocatel, decorated with gold and silver, and bearing the arms of the Patriarch of the Indies; it is of fifteenth-century Spanish work, and was in the San Donato collection.

The tapestries, shown herewith, are also worthy of special notice. The fine figure of "Penelope" is from a painting by Maillart, and was executed at the celebrated Gobelins manufactory. The wife of the sage Ulysses is evidently thinking of her wandering lord, whose long absence exposed her to those unwelcome suitors whose importunities could only be met by promising an answer when her tapestry was finished, and then undoing by night what she had done during the day. The other vigorous design of leaves, flowers, trunk and twigs is a sixteenth-century Flemish pattern, and might furnish a good suggestion for modern embroidery.

DOOR-CURTAINS.

FOR a curtain that is to be drawn over a door, a simple treatment is desirable—a repeated pattern all over it, or sprays of several sizes with a border of line patterns. Mrs. Glaister says: "A great deal of the finished effect of this, and indeed of all decorative needlework, depends on the apparently unimportant lines and borders with which the patterns are bounded and kept together. No directions can be given for them; they require a sense of proportion and feeling of fitness in the worker. Often they have to be put in after the work is otherwise finished; a thick line and a thin one, a little zigzag or herringbone between two lines, a row of dots or sloping stitches beside a line, will often make a marvellous difference to the finish and completeness of a pattern which without them gave a vague dissatisfaction. These lines sometimes serve to give a balance of color that was wanting without them. Speaking very generally, middle tints of the ornament will serve for the color, but if, as happens sometimes, the color of flowers is felt to be a little too strong in the general effect, a few stitches of their color in the bordering lines between or beside, say the green of the leaves, may greatly improve matters. Lay some threads of the worsted or silk you may be using on the cloth beside the pattern, and you will readily judge of the effect."

A perpendicular arrangement of the ornament may be used sometimes for door curtains, though with caution. A dark blue curtain may have a pattern of oranges, leaves, and flowers worked in crewels. The

orange being a good deal conventionalized in form already, by being made into an upright running pattern, and it being of more importance to make an harmonious decoration than a faithful portrait of the tree, the fruit must be conventionalized in color into a golden brown or a dim yellow, with a green one here and there. The leaves must be a brownish green; two shades will be enough; the darker of which will serve also for the stems. The flowers must be put in sparingly in a very yellow white, and the yellow stamens and greenish buds should be made much of. The fruit must not be shaded, and the stitches should be upright in the middle, curving a little toward the top and bottom from the outside. Except in the case of an orange being seen endways, so that eye or stalk comes in the middle, when the stitches must be directed toward the centre, the shape of the fruit will quite



GOBELINS TAPESTRY. "PENELOPE." BY M. MAILLART.

sufficiently convey the idea of roundness. This will be a very rich decoration, yet notice how few colors are needed for it: one shade of yellow-brown, three of green, with a little white and bright yellow, which may be in flosel, are all that is needed. This treatment of the orange, it may be remarked, "en passant" may be applied with advantage in connection with one of the crewel-work designs given in the supplement of THE ART AMATEUR last May.

Another handsome doorway curtain may be seen of a dull gold-colored cloth, with a border all round like a carpet, of a reddish-pink, rather pale, with a conventional leaf pattern worked on it in dark brown, which must also edge the border. On the lower part of the curtain, springing from the border, may be three or four upright sprays of very conventional flowers, the leaves dark brown, and the flowers pink with brown centres and

outlined in brown; the leaves may be veined with pink. Another device for curtains that take the place of folding-doors, is two shades of green silk sheeting, large flowers worked on the dado of the darker sheeting, and a single large spray of the flowers worked above the dado on each side of the opening of the curtains; some lighter sprays at the top of each curtain.

EMBROIDERED PIANO-FRONTS.

SILK stuffs with a pattern woven into them, used for piano-fronts, give a diapered richness of effect, and thus help a pattern that on a plain ground would look rather poor, and they often answer when a worked diaper would be too heavy or too laborious. Little patterns in lines and diamonds are better than flowered patterns, though these may be used with good effect, after the style of some French brocades and of some kinds of China, where a little ornament of the color of the ground underlies the colored ornament, giving to it a kind of soft echo. A remarkably pretty piano-front is done on bronze-green satin, the design being sprays of convolvulus springing from a gray satin vase in the centre. The flowers are worked in blue and white, the leaves in various shades of green. To relieve the whole, three or four sulphur-colored butterflies are introduced hovering over the flowers; the whole is enclosed in a very simple border of green and blue.

Frieze-like processions and arrangements of figures suit a piano well, especially if they have some reference to music; and though figures in needlework are rarely successful, some people have a special talent for their production in this way. They should be very well and accurately done; outline, with a few expressive lines for the detail, or shading, is the style most likely to look well. A judicious arrangement of singing-birds would be more within the compass of the ordinary worker; not that we are averse to great efforts, or to new or original applications of needlework, but the applications must be suitable to the means at command, and the great efforts should be rightly directed.

TRANSFERRING PATTERNS.

SINCE the publication of instructions on this subject in an early issue of THE ART AMATEUR we have been so often asked for similar information by new subscribers, that we offer no apology for presenting the following:

To transfer patterns from paper to stuff, any of the following ways are suitable: Place a piece of tracing-paper between the pattern and the stuff, and mark every line with a pencil or any pointed instrument, such as a knitting-pin. On taking away the pattern and the tracing-paper, an outline will be left upon the cloth sufficiently distinct to enable you to ink over it. The point of the tracer must not be too sharp.

Or: prick holes with a pin round the outline of the pattern, lay the pattern on the linen, and rub charcoal powder on it with a lump of cotton wool. This must only be done to linen, not to silk sheeting or any material at all hairy. When you first take off your paper after rubbing with the charcoal, do not be frightened at the dirty appearance, for this can all be cleaned off afterward, but first mark over the outline with pen and ink, taking care not to touch the other parts of the material with your hand. In other words, do not rest your hand upon the work in the usual way when drawing or writing. When you have finished tracing the outline, free the material from the charcoal thus: beat it from the back, and then flap (on no account rub) it with a clean duster.

Or: draw the pattern on white tarlatan, and place the tarlatan upon the linen; then go over the outline with pen and ink.

To transfer patterns on to colored materials is more difficult, because the markings are so apt to rub off. One way is to rub on white chalk, as described with charcoal powder, through holes, and afterward paint over the outline with thick Chinese white.

Or: tack a tissue-paper pattern to the cloth, outline with white cotton in long running stitches, and then tear away the tissue-paper. This is a little tedious, but is perhaps, on the whole, the most satisfactory way to those who cannot draw with pleasure.

ORIGIN OF LACE.

EMBROIDERY of garments and vestments was universal in the middle ages. To obtain the desired effect, gold, silver thread, and silk were applied to contrasting colors. Embroidery on solid linen was used for altar-covers and grave-clothes; but this being ineffective from a distance (unless worked with materials and colors which would not stand washing), perforating the linen by open-work embroidery, called cut-work, suggested itself at an early period, and developed into reticella proper during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Contemporary with linen embroidery, and extensively practised, were drawn-work and darned netting, in which all the old designs of embroidery, historical and Biblical groups, figures, emblems, and symbols could be imitated. Equally early was knotted and plaited lace-work, made either by unravelling the ends of the cloth, knotting or plaiting them in different designs, or more frequently by doing the same with loose threads, fastened and arranged on a pillow.

Linen embroidery, cut-work, darned netting, drawn-work, knotted and plaited laces, were made in all convents during the middle ages, but exclusively for the use of the church; and therefore they were little known to the lay world. Comparatively few specimens of the earliest work have been preserved; the revival of this mediæval lace-work for profane purposes begins about 1450.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, when art emancipated itself more or less from the church, a desire was felt to make the costly embroidery movable, so that it could be worn on plain-colored materials with the same effect as the old fixed work, and could be changed from one garment to the other. For this purpose point-lace, which is but detached and movable embroidery, was introduced. At the same time knotted and plaited work was improved to pillow-lace proper, knotting and plaiting being superseded by weaving.

Point and pillow lace-work still remained confined to convents, Italy taking the lead, and Spain following. The nuns taught it to their lay pupils, and the art of producing it spread, but slowly, from Italy to France, from Spain to Flanders, Holland, and England.

During the sixteenth century lace-making developed into a lay industry with certain localities as centres for the manufacture of distinct kinds of lace. The gradual development of lace-work with regard to workmanship, style of design, and local manufacture, suggests the following principal divisions: First, with regard to workmanship: 1. Mediæval lace-work.—Linen embroidery and cut-work, darned netting, drawn-work, reticella, knotted work, plaited work, 2. Point-lace, 3. Pillow-lace.

combination of the two styles. The characteristic features of the five periods are very marked, and make it possible to decide with almost absolute certainty on the time when a certain piece of lace was made.

The Mediæval style introduces in the pattern symbolic groups, figures, and emblems, monsters, sacred and other animals, trees, leaves, wreaths, and scroll-work.

The Geometrical style is a combination of squares, triangles, lozenges, wheels, and segments of circles.

The Renaissance style is remarkable for fanciful flowing and undulating wreaths and garlands of leaves, flowers, and scroll-work, first in close and compact patterns, later more open, and connected with brides or button-holed netground, the "jours" filled up with point-work of endless variety. Point and pillow laces during this period were the most artistic in design, as well as the most elaborate in workmanship, and nearly every article of wear was trimmed with lace.

With the Rococo style begins the period of decline in lace-work. The graceful patterns of the Renaissance are replaced by disconnected and stiff designs, rigid and angular bouquets and flowers meaninglessly crowded together.

In the Dotted style the design shrinks to small bouquets, intermixed with small fleurons, rosettes, tears (larmes), bees (mouches). Drawn muslin and blonde supplant the old laces.

With regard to geographical centres, we remark that prior to 1550 lace-making was universal in all the convents of Europe. After 1550 Venice takes the lead, and holds its sway for more than a century in the manufacture of needle-points, distributing patterns for imitation to its dependencies, to the Ionian Islands, to Spain, France, and the Netherlands. At the same time Genoa enters the lists with knotted and plaited laces, develops and spreads lace-making on the pillow; but the glories of Venice and Genoa pass away. During the second half of the seventeenth century France takes up the working of needle-points; the Netherlands get famous for their pillow-laces, until the French Revolution makes an end of all artistic and elaborate work.

SEVERAL of the new tea cloths have mottoes worked on them in blue cotton, in outline stitch, and some have a design of cups and

saucers, or small, quaint, old-fashioned figures, such as are given in our supplement this month. Those who prefer to etch the design may do so with a coarse pen and good marking-ink, or for finer work with the specially prepared etching-ink sold by F. A. Whiting, of Dunellen, N. J. Both cloth and cosey may be etched. The cosey should be made up before being etched. For painting on it should also be made up first.



FLEMISH TAPESTRY BORDER OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Second, with regard to style of design: 1. Mediæval style up to 1550. 2. Geometrical style, 1550-1620. 3. Renaissance style, 1620-1720. 4. Rococo style, 1720-1770. 5. Dotted style, 1770-1810.

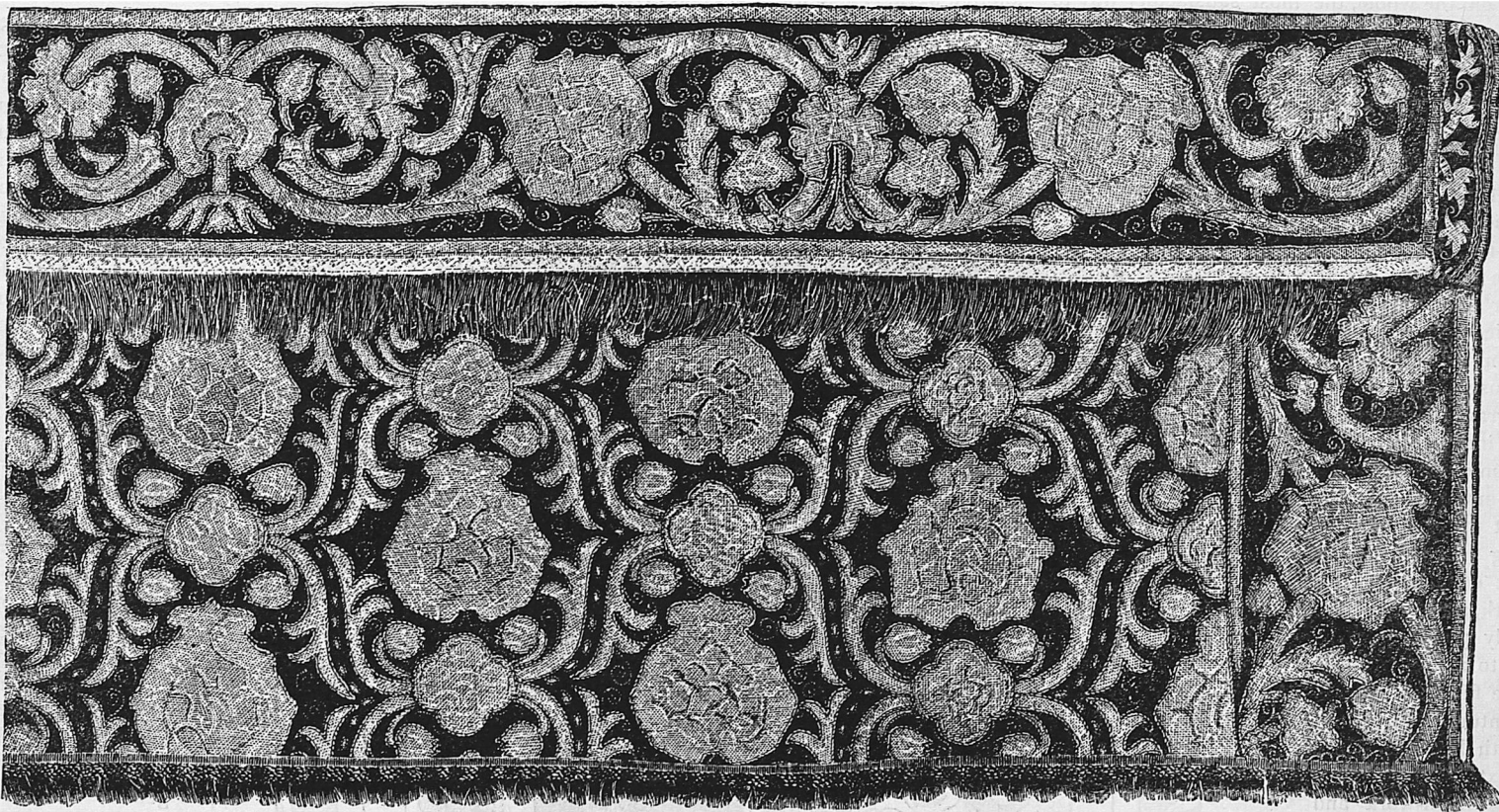
The design of lace always followed the prevalent style of ornamentation of the day, but the dates given as the limits of the different styles are to be understood with a period of transition spreading over ten years before and after, when the character of the design was a

CREWEL-WORK PATTERNS.

"ZETA" gives the results of her experience in crewel-work and offers some advice to beginners, as follows: Very bold, coarsely-worked designs, though usually the best, look out of place in very small rooms.

drawing squares. Suppose you want to double the size of a design; you begin by ruling squares exactly half an inch wide all over the pattern to be copied. Then, on a large sheet of paper, you rule an equal number of squares exactly one inch wide. It is then very easy to copy the design from the small to the large squares,

cution of work. It is placed just where it can be most easily looked into, and being tightly stretched, shows either defects or beauties more than anything else in the room. Curtain borders, on the contrary, may be done as roughly and coarsely as you like, so long as the general effect is good. The same applies to bed-valances and



GENOESE ALTAR-FRONT IN CRIMSON VELVET AND GOLD.

(SEE PAGE 78.)

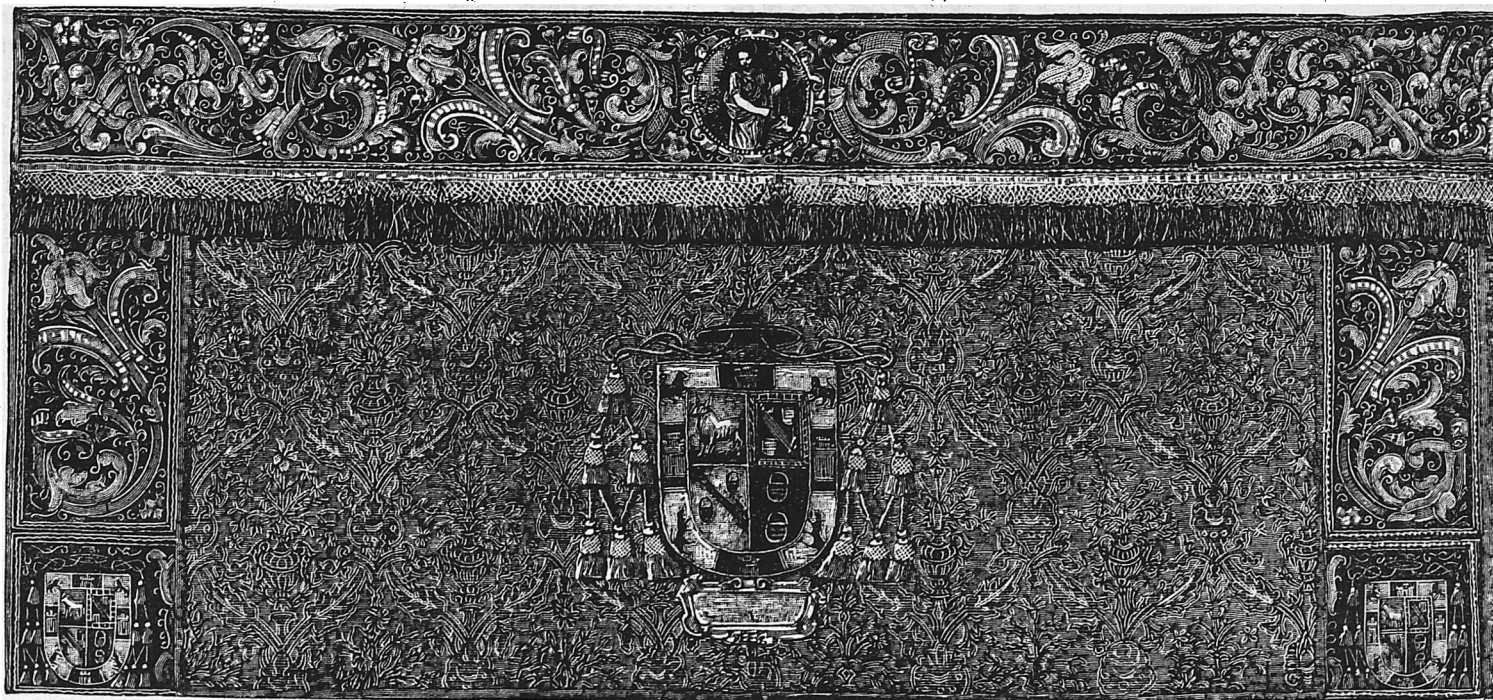
As a rule, there is no doubt that conventional patterns are the most effective when worked. I do not mean by this to exclude flowers, but I would have all flowers more or less conventionally treated. Many are of such a nature that they can be at the same time natural and conventional; and that is why the effect of lilies, sunflowers, tulips, and daffodils is much better than that of

I always number the squares on each piece of paper, which prevents all possibility of confusion.

Many wall-papers will furnish you with ideas, but small quantities of the best of these are not easy to obtain, unless you happen to be on good terms with some modern decorator, who will lend you his pattern-books. Of course, if you come across a good piece of really old

hangings; but counterpanes should be worked more carefully, as they, again, are more on a level with the eye.

I am sure that it answers to work the centre of a counterpane, as well as the border. When the whole is done, it is a beautiful piece of work, but a border alone is often lost. I think, on the whole, that nothing is so effective for these as a tolerably conventional



SPANISH ALTAR-FRONT IN RED BROCCATEL DECORATED WITH GOLD AND SILVER.

(SEE PAGE 78.)

roses, brambles, or Virginia creepers. Extremely good patterns are also to be obtained from enlarged photographs of Venetian and Florentine ornament. Two of the best designs I have I got in that way. They should then be worked in blue crewels on white linen.

The most simple plan of enlarging patterns is by

work, and are able to copy both the coloring and stitches, you will not neglect to do so; but many old designs are no better than many modern ones, and will not repay the trouble of copying.

In working a mantel-piece border, I should always recommend the most careful choice of pattern and ex-

pattern, worked all over in dark blue. But a border of oranges, pomegranates, large daisies, or sunflowers, with smaller bunches of the same powdered all over, always looks well; and I have seen a very pretty one covered with separate bunches of different flowers, such as tulips, and poppies.